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# Words of Truth

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## Elders Of Tradition

By: Brian A. Yeager

In May, I received the following question in an email: “Brother Yeager I enjoy your articles and material online. I have written you a few times and find the bible answers you give very useful. We spoke once but I don’t remember when. Our congregation has 3 elders though we are small in number. We only have 10 men in the church. Last week our elders gave all of the men who are on the duty roster to lead a list of expectations for leaders and for the serving on the table. They require all men to 1) Wear a tie, dress slacks, dress shirt, polished dress shoes, belt, and tucked in shirt. 2) Attend a class on leadership offered by the minister and receive a certificate of completion. 3) Must attend all Sunday services and miss no more than 1 Wednesday service per month. 4) Must sign a disclosure saying we will not discuss how much money members give. 5) Must meet with the elders monthly to discuss how we are leading in services and take direction on how to better assist in worship. I am struggling with this. How do I respond to this? I cannot think of a place in the bible where anything like this is commanded by God. Also, can I share what you write back with the elders and minister? Or, if I am wrong in assuming this list is wrong, can you help me understand how it is not wrong?”

I was unable to respond to the questions above because the sender did not include a return email address. The email was sent through a form on my website that I have now discontinued so that this doesn’t happen again. So, I decided to write an article on these things for all to benefit from. I could write one hundred pages of material on the questions above with all that comes to mind from the Scriptures. It will be a task to keep this to the space I have, so let me get started right away beginning with the authority elders really have.

### The Authority Of Elders

Qualified elders (I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9) are supposed to feed and protect the local church (Acts 20:28). They are to be followed (Hebrews 13:7). They are to be obeyed, for they will give an account for their watching over the souls of the local flock (Hebrews 13:17). As with all men in authority, God’s authority supersedes all others (II Samuel 7:1-7 and Acts 5:29). Faithful elders will hold the word of God and sound doctrine (Titus 1:9).

Elders do NOT have authority to act as Lords over the local church. Notice: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”* (I Peter 5:1-3). Elders are not the final say of all things. They can err (Acts 20:28-31). If they do, they are to be properly disciplined for such (I Timothy 5:19-20). Elders must, as all men, submit themselves to the authority of our Lord (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 11:28, Luke 6:46,

Ephesians 5:10, Colossians 3:17, and James 2:10-12). No man has the right to create his own doctrines (Galatians 1:6-9).

Before we get to the questions, let's deal with one more thing. The church in Ephesus had elders (Acts 20:17). Yet, they still needed the guidance of others. The Apostle Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to charge them not to teach or give heed to other doctrines (I Timothy 1:3-7). Whether an elder or not, all men are accountable to the words of Christ (John 12:48). If ANY teaches something other than the truth, they are to be dealt with Scripturally (Romans 16:17-18, I Timothy 6:3-5, and II John 1:9-11). Now, let's briefly examine the questions.

### **To The Questions...**

Can an elder create a dress code for worship or those leading in worship? NO! He has not been given authority from the Lord to do so. Responsible, knowledgeable Christians understand that we should bend to some areas of local culture wherein we have liberties to do so (I Corinthians 9:19-27). So, in some areas of the world, Christians might "dress up" so as not to be a stumblingblock to the weak and unlearned (Romans 15:1-3 and I Corinthians 8:9). That being said, to say someone MUST wear a tie, etc. to properly serve in worship is to create a doctrine of men. In doing so, you are disobeying God (Mark 7:1-9 and Colossians 2:18-23). So, those elders are GOING TO HELL (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). Do you really think Jesus, Peter, Paul, John, James, etc. wore a suit and tie? If so, you're dumb! Fact is, overdressing in the Bible during worship was more of a problem than solution (James 2:1-9).

In regard to a study or class before leading in worship, I really cannot offer too much Scripturally on this. I don't know enough (Proverbs 18:13). Do consider, it is certainly right to teach men to pray (Luke 11:1) because praying incorrectly causes problems for the whole assembly in various ways (i.e. I Corinthians 14:15-16, James 4:3, and I John 5:14-15).

The attendance requirements this eldership has in place actually falls short of the word of God. Whenever the congregation assembles, all Christians are required to be there by our Lord (Hebrews 10:22-25). The elder's doctrine on this matter removes from the word of God (Proverbs 30:5-6).

What a person gives to the Lord is no one else's concern. A person is to give as he or she has purposed in his heart (II Corinthians 9:7). The forcing of a signing of a disclosure does not fit anything written in the Scriptures. In fact, this man-made doctrine brings to mind the fact that our yes and no is to be sufficient (Matthew 5:37).

The fifth question is a bit too vague for me to write about. Elders should be involved in all things spiritual concerning the local congregation. We have covered that already. If it is the most expedient means to set up a time to teach those leading in worship, that is elders taking spiritual oversight of the brethren.

### **Conclusion**

Elders whom go and create their own doctrines, like all other false teachers, must be stopped (Titus 1:10-14). The church belongs to Christ (Matthew 16:18), as does authority over His church (Ephesians 1:22-23 and Hebrews 3:1-6). Let's protect the headship of Jesus.

## **Milkshakes**

### **When One Scripture Qualifies Another**

*By: Brian A. Yeager*

In our continued study of how we must be reasonable people in studying the Scriptures, we are going to discuss how sometimes a Scripture has another that qualifies it. In this case, you have to use some deductive reasoning to see what a Scripture is not saying to understand what it is saying.

As an example, consider the following Scriptures: *“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching... Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door... But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer”* (Hebrews 10:25, James 5:8-9, and I Peter 4:7).

If you read just the Scriptures above, you could easily come to a conclusion that Jesus was returning in the first century and that they knew such was coming. People who teach the error of Preterism (AD 70 Doctrine) use those verses to say that the Judgment Day, including Christ’s return, has come and passed. However, other Scriptures qualify those Scriptures quoted above. Notice: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”* (Matthew 24:35-36). Jesus taught that NO ONE knew when He was coming or the end would occur. That qualifies verses such as Hebrews 10:25, James 5:8-9, and I Peter 4:7. It tells us those Scriptures could not have been speaking of the return of our Savior. Other Scriptures as well show the return of our Lord would be a surprise (Matthew 24:42-44) and the world would cease to exist at that time (II Peter 3:1-14).

You have read qualifying Scriptures that tell us that Hebrews 10:25, James 5:8-9, and I Peter 4:7 are not discussing the return of Christ. So, what are they talking about? Again, using our ability to reason and deduce from other qualifying Scriptures, we can figure this out.

Jesus prophesied of a destruction that would be able to be seen coming. He said it would be marked by wars, rumors of wars, nation against nation, pestilences, earthquakes, false prophets, lacking love etc. He said those days would be a time wherein those in Judaea would flee into the mountains. He said there would be false Christs with abilities to show signs and wonders that would deceive the very elect. He said there would be signs in the sky. He said there would be a sign of His judgment coming. You can read all of those things, and more, in Matthew 23:34-24:34. At the very end of that reading you find that all written in that context, up to that point, would be fulfilled in that generation. Thus, we can fully know that the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in AD 70, is the end discussed in Hebrews 10:25, James 5:8-9, and I Peter 4:7. That is the only conclusion that can be properly drawn from the word of God.

As we learned in this brief study, even confusing Scriptures can be studied out and understood (II Peter 3:15-18). What we need to add to this realization about studying the Scriptures is how that we must know the context of a Scripture as well. Many Scriptural errors have occurred because people used Scriptures out of context. The importance of context will be our next brief study.